

Merritt Parkway, (Southbound) Fairfield
Service Station

HAER No. CT-137

Abutting the north side of the Merritt Parkway,
servicing the southbound lanes at the 28.4 mile mark
Fairfield
Fairfield County
Connecticut

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
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MERRITT PARKWAY (SOUTHBOUND) FAIRFIELD SERVICE STATION

HAER No. CT-137

Location: Abutting the north side of the Merritt Parkway, servicing the southbound lanes at the 28.4 mile mark; Fairfield, Fairfield County, Connecticut

UTM 18.646120.4563295
Quad: Westport, Connecticut

Date of Construction: 1941

Engineer: Connecticut Highway Department

Architect: George Dunkelberger, Connecticut Highway Department

Significance: The service stations of the Merritt illustrate the Connecticut Highway Department's policy of limiting private commercial development and conforming to aesthetic treatment sympathetic to a parkway setting. Built and owned by the state, these were, and continue to be, leased to private companies. Stylistically these Colonial Revival structures were influenced by the service stations of the Westchester County, New York, parkway system.

Description: Originally the Colonial Revival-styled service station was a one-story building with side-gabled roofs over a three-unit floor plan. The center unit is larger than the other two, and has a higher roof. An addition on the east end almost doubles the size of the station. The exterior walls are brick painted tan, and the roof is covered with slate shingles. A chimney occurs at the peak at the east end of the center gable. A wood dormer with a clock is centered in the center gable. The center room originally had a bay window, but the opening has been widened and deepened to hold a glass and aluminum storefront. The center room has a glass door at the east and west ends of the front facade. The outer rooms have octagonal windows, and the addition has textured-glass windows with simulated six-over-six-light double-hung sash and white shutters.

The center room contains the cashier's booth, coolers, and food racks. The east room has a beverage bar and is the passageway to the addition that contains the public restrooms, and the west room is storage.

Originally the service station was located behind a semi-circular concrete pad with gasoline pumps in the middle. The current pumps are on a rectangular concrete pad with a low-pitched gabled canopy.

History:

Anticipating drastic fluctuations in directional traffic volume between the morning and evening rush hours, parkway planners decided that identical stations should be located directly opposite each other on the parkway. This way attendants could be shifted across the road during peak traffic periods. Although owned by the state, the business was originally leased to the Tide Water Associated Oil Company, which paid \$250 per month rent and 3.39 cents per gallon of gasoline sold.

This station has had several alterations through the years. In 1958 it was remodeled and a 900-square-foot addition was attached to the east side. At the same time the acceleration and deceleration lanes were lengthened and widened, the parking area was expanded. In 1988, the interior of the station was totally renovated and new pumps were installed.

Sources:

"Motorists Demand Fast Service at New Parkway Stations." National Petroleum News 30 October 1940: 35-37.

Contract Card File. Map File and Engineering Records Department, Connecticut Department of Transportation: Wethersfield, CT. This includes construction drawings, copies of which are in the HAER field records.

Historians:

Corinne Smith, HAER Engineer, and Todd Thibodeau, HABS/HAER Historian, August 1992.

For additional information on the Merritt Parkway and its history and structures, see HAER No. CT-63.